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BALLAD CRITICISM IN SCANDINAVIA AND GREAT BRITAIN DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, by Sigurd Bernhard Hustvedt, Ph.D. New York, 1916, The American-Scandinavian Foundation. Pp. 335.

Quite apart from the new aesthetic of Croce, and the new criticism set forth by Professor Spingarn in the Columbia University *Lectures in Literature*, both of which deny the existence of any poetic kinds, and therefore rule the ballad out of court, the drift of recent investigation in this *genre* is to refuse recognition of it as a *genre*, as a distinct species of poetry. It is hard to see, then, why so many able papers still appear on the "ballad question," when the ballad question has been struck from the list of living issues. Why slay the slain? Within three years, twice as many capital articles on this theme have come to the address of the present reviewer. One says that popular and traditional ballads not only have fallen from grace, but are also deprived of their existence as a separate poetic class, and are to be put where the eighteenth century put them, with all poems that are "grown out of kind," the derelicts, byblows, degenerates, and a few masterless pieces of merit. Another says that the differencing qualities of the ballad, indicated so late as 1911 by Professor W. P. Ker in his address before the British Academy, are not differencing qualities at all, but, even in the guise of repetition and refrain, supposed popular elements are only peculiarities due now to mere garrulousness, and now, where iteration and dramatic effectiveness cannot be so classed, to the genius of a nameless poet. Yet another writer, in gentler mood, pleads with the romantic sinner to leave off his damnable "anthropology," and try to lead a decent literary life, a humanistic life. Finally, the cowboy songs of the southwest are used as vantage-ground for a bombardment that shall dispose forever of the heresy of the "Harvard School."

Now it is to be noted that all these articles agree, for their motive, in a perfervid horror of romanticism. It is taken for granted that whatever is romantic is wrong, that all who are wrong are romantic, and that the achievements of a century of historical and comparative scholarship must go among the wastes of time. Moreover, now in so many words, now by implication, the writers return to the point of view of the early eighteenth century, to a rationalism differing from the Johnsonian sort only by use of the twentieth century dialect, and by throwing a little harmless psychological dust into the reader's eyes.

What, now, are the real connotations of "romantic?" What was the actual outcome, good or bad, sane or wild, silly or genial, of that age of scholarship and research, so far as the ballad question is concerned? How much of this romantic theory, so called, strikes its roots in the older criticism? And what was the outcome of that other school of criticism which is surely not dishonoured by the name of rationalist? A partial answer to all this querying may be found in the book now under review. It is a book of summaries, and of direct excerpt and quotation. The summaries,—for example, that on the drift of criticism from Sidney to Addison,—repeat, in the main, what was known before; but the particular gleanings of opinion, gathered in painstaking search of many forgotten letters and books and periodicals, bring a store of new and welcome material. One is glad to have the definition of "ballad" from Philips, John

Dennis's comment on Ben Jonson's famous but vaguely authorized praise of *Chevy Chase*, the real Robert Heron in his views of balladry, articles from the *Edinburgh Bee*, and a host of similar rescues from the Scandinavian. So far as the title of the book undertakes to follow ballad criticism, the task has been accomplished. But there is much more to do. It was no part of Dr. Hustvedt's plan to cover the nineteenth century, with its triumphs of the romantic school, or to go so far afield as Germany within the limits of the earlier period. But it may be pointed out that on his chosen ground he does not disentangle from the important discussion of poetic origins by such men as Lowth, Robert Wood, Dr. John Brown, and others, the particular comments, suggestions, comparisons, which inspired Hamann, Herder, and perhaps Bürger himself with a "romantic" theory of the ballads. Such disentanglement would be a boon. For precisely in that question of the ballad as poetic form, and not as poetic material, there is regrettable confusion of treatment, which a reasoned statement of the old views might well clear up. What one author (p. 298) calls "a definite conception of the ballad as a type," reached by the Scandinavian critics "even before the beginning of the eighteenth century," on the one hand, and, on the other, those "special theories regarding authorship" of the individual ballads, with which the same critics were not "much concerned," are too often treated as interchangeable if not identical terms. They are very properly separated by our author, as they were by the older critics. Modern critics confuse them. Most of the German dissertations, following John Meier's *Kunslied im Volksmunde*, treat the history of ballad criticism in the spirit of this confusion; so do literary critics like Professor Gregory Smith and Mr. Henderson; so do the American writers who will confute the "Harvard school." There remains to be written a right history of romantic ballad criticism, of the comparative and historical studies in popular verse through most of the nineteenth century, particularly in Germany and Scandinavia, and of the current rationalistic opposition. In such a book the romantic theory of the ballad, and its provenance, would be championed by at least one of the greatest of all ballad collectors and ballad lovers, "the chief of those who know." What Svend Grundtvig thought of the authorship of ballads can be read in abstract, so to speak, in his introduction to *Marsk Stig*.¹ What he thought of the ballad as a type, a kind, and its origins, is set forth in his introduction to the German translation by Rosa Warrens.² Here his views run directly counter to those of Ferdinand Wolf, who a year before had written an introduction to the same translator's Swedish ballads. Material of this sort has been gathered, but not completely or in strict confinement to the field of balladry. The book that should be made upon these lines would be a pendant to the present volume, because of the preponderance of romantic opinion in the nineteenth century, slowly yielding to a new rationalism at the last, compared with a reversed process in the preceding age. Together, the two books would give a definitive history of ballad criticism.

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¹ *D. G. F.*, III, 339, beginning with "En saadan opfattelse . . ."

² *Dänische Volkslieder der Vorzeit*, Hamburg, 1858.